



# LP Bulletin

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## Bulletin 733 - 01/11 - Drug Trafficking, Crew consequences - Worldwide

**We would like to bring to Members' attention a recent case which highlights the dangers for crew in accepting requests from unknown persons to take packages of unknown content onboard a vessel.**



In this particular case, whilst on shore leave in a West African port, a junior Cadet was approached in the street by a man not known to him and asked to take a "package" back onboard the vessel. The stranger offered to make payment to the Cadet if he successfully delivered the package to a contact in Europe, which was where the ship was due to sail following departure from West Africa. Understandably, the Cadet was cautious at first and refused to assist in the stranger's request. However, after reassurance from the man that he "was doing nothing wrong" and that he would be well rewarded for his efforts, the Cadet acquiesced. It was only later that the Cadet discovered that the package was in fact drugs, but by then he had naively convinced himself that the task was simple and that he would successfully deliver the package without mishap.

During the vessel's subsequent journey to Europe, the Master discovered the package in the Cadet's cabin during a routine inspection of the accommodation area. It was revealed that the package was approximately 6kg of cocaine.

Following discovery of the drugs, the Master immediately (and correctly) notified the authorities at the vessel's next port of call in France. On arrival the Cadet was taken ashore by the local Police, prosecuted, and ordered to serve a custodial sentence in a French prison.

It was anticipated that the French authorities may detain the vessel so that a full investigation could be carried out. However, because the Master had been so open and honest in his initial disclosure to the authorities of the presence of narcotics onboard, no further action was taken against vessel or crew and the ship was permitted to sail without delay.

This case illustrates the importance for Members to repeatedly warn officers and crew that, no matter how good the offer might be, they should never be tempted to take onboard parcels received from strangers. The shipping industry is no different from the airline industry in that respect. Moreover, if drugs are discovered onboard, full disclosure to the appropriate port authorities may often save innocent crew members from unwarranted interrogation and, at the same time, avoid possible delay to the vessel.



**Source of information:**

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